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ACTION SS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1921

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 04101

EXDIS DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, RW  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FORMER MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CASIMIR BIZIMUNGU ASKED TO SEE ME PRIVATELY TO TALK POLITICS. WE STARTED BY TALKING ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS, THE PROBLEMS IN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, AND PERSONALITIES WITHIN THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. THE LAST POINT LED TO THE PURPOSE OF HIS INITIATIVE.
3. ALTHOUGH AN ACTIVE AND LOYAL MEMBER OF THE MRND, BIZIMUNGU HAS NOW REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY IT IS TIME FOR HABYARIMANA TO ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION TO LEAVE THE PRESIDENCY. HE

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SAID THAT CANADIAN AMBASSADOR LAVERDURE HAD ALREADY URGED THE PRESIDENT TO ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION NOT TO SEEK RE-ELECTION FOLLOWING THE TRANSITION PERIOD. (LAVERDURE HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED AND HIS REPLACEMENT HAS NOT YET VISITED KIGALI FROM HIS POST OF RESIDENCE IN KINSHASA). BIZIMUNGU THEN WENT ON TO SUGGEST THAT THE AMERICAN, FRENCH AND BELGIAN AMBASSADORS SHOULD GET TOGETHER AND URGE HABYARIMANA TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE WOULD NOT BE A CANDIDATE WHEN ELECTIONS ARE HELD. AS AN ALTERNATIVE HE SUGGESTED THAT THE MESSAGE BE SENT

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FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY COHEN TO THE PRESIDENT  
GIVING HIM A STRONG RECOMMENDATION THAT HE WITHDRAW  
FROM FUTURE CANDIDACY.

4. I ASKED BIZIMUNGU IF HE HAD EVER MADE THE  
SUGGESTION HIMSELF TO THE PRESIDENT. HE SAID THE  
CLOSEST HE HAD GOTTEN TO MAKING A RECOMMENDATION WAS  
ASKING THE PRESIDENT IF THE PRESIDENT INTENDED TO BE  
A CANDIDATE WHEN ELECTIONS ARE HELD. THE PRESIDENT'S  
ANSWER HAD BEEN "WHY NOT, I'M A RWANDAN AND FREE TO  
BE A CANDIDATE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE." BIZIMUNGU WAS  
NOT ENCOURAGED BY THIS REPLY. BUT HE CLAIMS THAT  
THERE ARE OTHER SENIOR LEADERS WITHIN THE MRND WHO  
FEEL THAT THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCED DEPARTURE IS WHAT  
IS NECESSARY TO UNBLOCK THE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS.

5. I TOLD BIZIMUNGU I DID NOT THINK IT WAS AN  
APPROPRIATE ROLE FOR FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TO TELL A  
PRESIDENT THAT HE SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT BE A CANDIDATE  
FOR RE-ELECTION. I AGREED WITH HIM, HOWEVER, THAT  
SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT WOULD TOTALLY

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CHANGE THE POLITICAL EQUATION WHICH WAS NOW BEING  
WORKED OUT. I SAID IT WAS ALSO MY VIEW THAT THE  
PRESIDENT'S PLACE IN HISTORY WOULD BE ASSURED BY SUCH  
A SELFLESS DECISION AT THIS CRITICAL POINT IN  
RWANDA'S HISTORY. BUT I SAID IT WAS MY BELIEF THAT  
THIS WAS A DECISION TO BE TAKEN THROUGH INTERNAL  
POLITICAL FORCES, NOT PRESSED BY FOREIGNERS.

6. I THEN SUGGESTED TO BIZIMUNGU THAT PERHAPS THE  
PRESENT MOMENT WAS NOT THE RIGHT ONE FOR HIM TO TAKE  
THIS INITIATIVE. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE NEXT ROUND  
OF ARUSHA TALKS WOULD BE IMPORTANT, THAT THEY WOULD  
REVEAL CERTAIN FIRMLY HELD POSITIONS BY THE RPF AND  
BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES CONCERNING THE PRESIDENCY  
OF HABYARIMANA. IT COULD VERY WELL BE THAT AT SOME  
STAGE, PERHAPS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, THE ROLE OF  
THE PRESIDENCY WOULD EMERGE AS THE CRITICAL ELEMENT  
IN THE PEACE PROCESS. IF THAT SHOULD HAPPEN, THERE  
MIGHT WELL BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BIZIMUNGU AND HIS  
COLLABORATORS TO URGE THE PRESIDENT TO TAKE THE STEP  
TO UNBLOCK THE NEGOTIATIONS. I SAID I DID NOT SEE  
ANY WAY IN WHICH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD WISH TO  
WEIGH IN AT THIS STAGE, BUT WOULD NOT RULE OUT THE

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POSSIBILITY THAT WE WOULD BE SUPPपोर्टIVE OF SUCH AN  
INTERNAL INITIATIVE AT A TIME WHEN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS  
MIGHT NEED A MAJOR INITIATIVE TO AVOID FAILURE.

7. COMMENT: OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS CONSIDER  
BIZIMUNGU A HARDLINER. THEY ARE SHARPLY CRITICAL OF  
HIM FOR BEING UNABLE TO START A REAL DIALOGUE WITH  
THE RPF DURING THE PERIOD WHEN HE WAS FOREIGN  
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MINISTER. THAT IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKES THIS  
PROPOSAL FROM BIZIMUNGU SO FASCINATING. IT IS ALSO  
STRIKING IN ITS SIMILARITY TO THE PROPOSAL MADE TO ME  
BY PL LEADER JUSTIN MUGENZI JUST THREE DAYS EARLIER.  
MUGENZI PLEADED WITH ME THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BREAK  
THE CURRENT IMPASSE WAS FOR THE AMERICANS AND  
EUROPEANS TO GET HABYARIMANA TO RESIGN. MUGENZI ALSO  
SAW THE POSSIBILITY THAT FOREIGNERS COULD HAVE  
SUFFICIENT STATURE TO MAKE HABYARIMANA ACTUALLY  
QUIT. I TOLD MUGENZI THAT THINGS HAD GOTTEN A LOT  
WORSE IN ZAIRE BEFORE WE, THE FRENCH, AND THE  
BELGIANS HAD DECIDED TO URGE MOBUTU TO GIVE UP POWER,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 KIGALI 04101

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AND LOOK WHAT EFFECT IT HAD ON MOBUTU. MUGENZI INSISTED THAT MOBUTU WAS A MUCH STRONGER PERSON THAN HABYARIMANA, AND THAT THE LATTER WOULD IN FACT STEP DOWN IF URGED TO DO SO BY THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

8. IT IS NOT SURPRISING FOR MUGENZI TO WANT US TO DO HIS WORK FOR HIM. BUT IT IS SURPRISING FOR BIZIMUNGU TO MAKE THIS PROPOSAL. BIZIMUNGU TOLD ME THAT HE HAD HAD GOOD CONVERSATIONS WITH PL MINISTER OF JUSTICE MBONAMPEKA AND MDR FOREIGN MINISTER NGULINZIRA WHEN THE THREE RUHENGARI RESIDENT MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT WENT TOGETHER TO PLEAD FOR PEACE AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN RUHENGARI LAST WEEK. HE SAID

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THE THREE HAD WORKED TOGETHER IN A SIMILAR MEETING IN KIGALI. HE THINKS THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MINISTERS CAN WORK TOGETHER. HE IS PREPARED TO ADMIT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S FAMILY AND SOME OF THE MRND LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE UNREST IN THE COUNTRY. HE IS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE PRESIDENT PERSONALLY OR AGAINST MRND SECRETARY GENERAL MATTHEIU NGIRUMPATSE. AND HE IS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT MRND RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL OF THE PROBLEMS, ACCUSING BOTH TWAGIRAMUNGU AND MUGENZI OF BEING INSTIGATORS OF VIOLENCE WHEN IT SUITED THEIR PURPOSES ALSO. BUT HE HAS CONFIDENCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER (MDR), THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE (PL) AND IN THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE (MRND).

9. BIZIMUNGU'S MAJOR CONCERN AS HE ARTICULATED IT WAS NOT SECURITY PROBLEMS, BUT THE NEED FOR THE PRESIDENT TO STEP ASIDE IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE POLITICAL EQUATION. HE SAID THERE IS NO PROBLEM IN FINDING ANOTHER CANDIDATE WITHIN THE MRND TO RUN FOR

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PRESIDENT. HE ALSO BELIEVES THE MRND WILL CONTINUE TO BE A VITAL PARTY. HE INSISTS HE IS NOT HIMSELF INTERESTED IN RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT, ALTHOUGH HE IS YOUNG ENOUGH SO HE COULD DO IT ANYTIME IN THE NEXT 15 YEARS. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT 20 YEARS AS PRESIDENT IS LONG ENOUGH AND NO ONE MAN SHOULD STAY IN THAT POSITION LONGER THAN THAT, ESPECIALLY IF HE WANTS TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY.

10. PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER NSANZIMANA MAY EMBOLDEN BIZIMUNGU TO  
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TAKE HIS CASE WITH A FEW ALLIES DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT. I WILL TALK TO HIM AGAIN IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS. IN THE MEANTIME I WILL SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR AND WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR WHEN HE RETURNS, AND WITH THE PAPAL NUNCIO WHEN HE RETURNS. IF THE MRND SHOULD SUCCEED IN PERSUADING THE PRESIDENT AT LEAST TO CONSIDER WITHDRAWAL FROM CANDIDACY, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO TRY TO EXPLOIT IT TO NAIL DOWN THE PEACE ACCORD AND TO PRESS OPPOSITION PARTIES TO BE REASONABLE IN THEIR DEMANDS TO BRING ABOUT FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. END COMMENT.  
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